

than *daaroodensis* without any sandy tinge, more blackish streaked on the mantle and darker reddish on the crown.

Type: male, Sheikh, British Somaliland. Collected by Sir G. Archer on 1st November, 1917. B.M. Reg. No. 23.8.7.2739. In the British Museum (Natural History).

Distribution: plateau of British Somaliland (Suksodi, Sheikh, Burao and Warsangeli).

Notes: I am indebted to Mr. K. Smith for drawing my attention to the anomaly of an Eritrean bird (*blanfordi*) being treated as identical with a bird from British Somaliland. The name is taken from the Daarood, the largest of the Somali clan families.

A note on *Certhilauda curvirostris*

by MR. C. M. N. WHITE

Received 21st September, 1959

For reasons already given in the "Bulletin", I have concluded that the genera *Certhilauda* and *Mirafra* cannot be kept separate. This affects the names of two forms of *C. curvirostris*.

(i) *C. c. damarensis* Sharpe 1904 is preoccupied by *Mirafra damarensis* Sharpe 1874. Fortunately *kaokoensis* Bradfield 1944 is available for this race since the slightly darker colour of Kaokoveld birds seems insufficient to make subdivision of the northern populations of South West Africa worthwhile.

(ii) *C. c. transvaalensis* Roberts (1936. Rustenburg) is preoccupied by *Mirafra africana transvaalensis* Hartert, 1900. This form of *curvirostris* seems to me to be separable from *semitorquata* by its brighter and clearer red upperside with a less olive tinge, and darker buff underside. It occurs from Fourteen Streams over the Transvaal to the Natal uplands, and intergrades rather widely over the Orange Free State with *semitorquata*. I therefore propose *Mirafra curvirostris infelix* nom. nov. to replace *Certhilauda semitorquata transvaalensis* Roberts, 1936, Ann. Trvl. Mus. 18, p. 261. Olifants Lock, Rustenburg, Transvaal.

"On varieties of the Tufted Duck, with an account of an unrecorded type of variation"

by DRs. JAMES M. & JEFFERY G. HARRISON

Received 30th September, 1959

Varieties of the Tufted Duck, *Aythya fuligula* Boie, would seem sufficiently rare to warrant placing on record three instances of a very unusual type. Previous papers dealing with variations in this species are worthy of note and, as usual, suggest that these may in fact have phylogenetic significance. The first of these appeared in 1954 when one of us published a note on the occurrence of a white facial band in a duck of the species which was "almost as extensive as that of an adult duck Scaup, *Aythya marila marila*"¹.

The second paper appeared in 1955 under the authorship of Mr. Bryan Sage² in which he discusses the relationship of some ducks of the Genus *Aythya* Boie, affirming the biological principle of autophoric reverse mutation already advanced by us in previous papers and confirming the close affinity between the various species in this Genus. In



Plate 1 Variant Tufted Duck with darkened underparts

this paper Mr. Sage also refers to the appearance of white feathers in the under-tail coverts.

In a paper in 1957 Mr. Eric Gillham³ gives an account of the occurrences of both these characters based on a close study of this species in St. James's Park, London, between late April and early October in the years 1953-56 inclusive. He has established that the condition can occur both in immatures and rather commonly in adult females in their post-nuptial moult. This latter circumstance definitely rules out any suggestion of partial albinism, as has already been stated by Sage. In a further paper, Gillham⁴ describes a number of individuals exhibiting a patchy isabelline mosaic and also partial albinism, but of quite different distribution.

The variety now described and of which we have three examples, is distinctive in that the normal pure white of the belly is strongly flecked with dark chocolate brown feathers and we surmise that were such an individual seen in the field, considerable speculation as to its identity might result! The particular features of these variants would of course, be hidden when the birds are on the water.

The first specimen to come to us was an individual which could not be positively sexed. It was shot at Fordingbridge in Hampshire on 8th September, 1945 and was given to us as a skin by Mr. C. W. Mackworth-Praed (Plate I, right). The second, a first winter female (Plate I, middle) was bred in captivity by Dr. Edmund Gleadow and died in November, 1958. This bird shows the condition in an incipient stage. The third example (Plate I, left) is also a female and its exact age is unknown, but it was thought to have been wild-bred at Sevenoaks, Kent in 1958. It appeared on the Kent Wildfowlers' Reserve there in 1959 and was caught in the duck trap on 13th August, ringed, photographed and released. This bird was killed by a fox on 4th September, 1959 and was fortunately not too damaged. In the three weeks, there had been considerable advance in the dark flecking. When previously handled, the condition closely resembled the middle bird in the plate. All three birds show a suggestion of a white chin spot, as well as white feathers at the base of the bill, being most pronounced in the right hand bird.

At present we are unable to state whether this mutation occurs in both sexes. The significance of the white frontal band has already been discussed and correlated with another species in the Genus *Aythya*. The tentative suggestion that the tendency towards a darkening of the underparts is a phylogenetic link with some of the other dark-bellied species in this Genus cannot be lightly dismissed. It is to be remembered that in the Tribe *Aythiini* are included such forms as the Red-crested Pochard, *Netta rufina* (Pallas), the South American and African Pochards, *Netta erythrophthalma*, the Rosy-bill, *Netta peposaca* (Vieillot) and the New Zealand Scaup, *Aythya novae-seelandiae* (Gmelin), all of which are distinguished by having dark underparts.

In conclusion, we would express our grateful thanks to Mr. C. W. Mackworth-Praed and Dr. Edmund Gleadow for the gift of the specimens and to Mr. George Wallis of the Kent Sand and Ballast Company for allowing us to manage his ballast water as a wildfowl reserve, on which the third specimen was found.

References:—

¹ Harrison, Jeffery G. "On an unusual Tufted Duck and Smew" Bull. B.O.C., Vol. 74, pp. 53-4. 1954.

- ² Sage, Bryan L. "Comments on the Relationship of some Ducks in the Genus *Aythya* Boie" Bull. B.O.C. Vol. 75, pp. 53-4. 1955.
- ³ Gillham, E. H. "Field Notes on the White Feathering at the Base of the Bill and White Under-tail Coverts in the Tufted Duck" British Birds, Vol. L, pp. 389-392. 1957.
- ⁴ Gillham, E. H. "Variations of plumage colouration in the Pochard *Aythya ferina* and the Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*" Bull. B.O.C., Vol. 79, pp. 87-8. 1959.

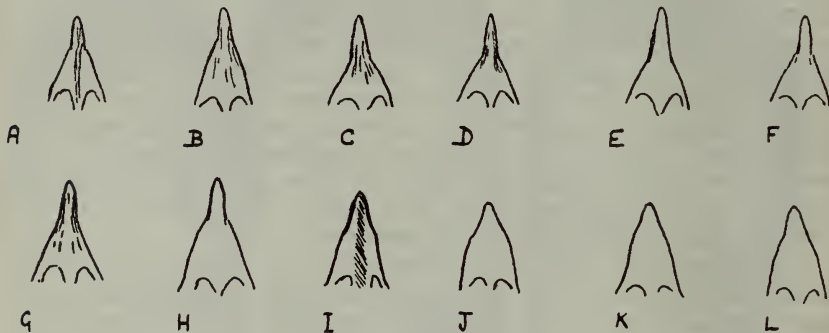
Some Taxonomic Characteristics of the genus *Lagonosticta*

by MR. C. J. O. HARRISON

Received 18th September, 1959

INTRODUCTION.

Within the estrildine waxbills it is comparatively easy to recognise the existence of the genus *Lagonosticta*, the Fire-finches, but it is difficult to find a series of taxonomic characteristics which are common to all the species which comprise it, and will separate them from those of other genera. I have previously examined the behavioural characteristics of some of these species and have come to the conclusion that the Lavender Finch, *caerulescens*, is not a member of this genus and has erroneously been placed in it (Harrison 1956).



Bills of some waxbills viewed from above. (Approx. x2)

A. *L. senegala*
E. *L. rubricata*
I. *L. rufopicta*

B. *L. nigricollis*
F. *L. jamesoni*
J. *E. perreini*

C. *L. larvata*
G. *L. landanae*
K. *E. caerulescens*

D. *L. vinacea*
H. *L. rara*
L. *E. eelpoda*

CHARACTERISTICS

If we remove the Lavender Finches we can begin by saying that *Lagonosticta* tend to be squat, ground-feeding waxbills and usually lack the gregarious tendencies of the genus *Estrilda*. In addition to the general plumage pattern two characteristics which have been used to separate these species are the possession of a slight lateral compression of the bill and the presence of small white dots on the sides. To this I should like to add the possession a distinct coloured eye-rim.

1. Plumage.

If the general plumage pattern of the Fire-finches is examined two different groups are apparent. In the first the species have a mainly red